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25 May 1951

Possible Problems on Terms of Reference for NIE-37, The Likelihood
of a Soviet Assault on Japan in 1951

1. Since these Terms of Reference are somewhat of a new departure (they pose a fairly detailed series of searching questions rather than merely a broad NIE outline), we might have some difficulty with the agencies. This new departure is designed to secure more detailed and meaningful contributions, particularly from the three services, than we have received in the past.
2. A major problem is likely to arise over the perennial question of "raw" vs. "weighted" capabilities. In this case we feel we have the strongest possible grounds for insisting that the likelihood of a Soviet assault on Japan will depend largely on the Soviet estimate of their own capabilities against probable US opposition -- and that, therefore, we are compelled to look at the problem through Soviet eyes and compare Soviet with US capabilities.
3. Another problem may arise over Assumptions. We have deliberately tried to have as few assumptions as possible in order not to artificially limit the problem. The single assumption has been limited to Part One on "Capabilities"; we believe that assumptions should be avoided when dealing with "Intentions", as in Part Two, on the grounds that all factors bearing on intentions should be explored.

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DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGES REQUIRED ☐
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGES YES: TO ☒ 1991
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: H2 TS-2
DATE: 2/13/81 REVIEWER: 009256

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